









# INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF

## HON. JOHN WENTWORTH,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

### COMMON COUNCIL,

AT

### METROPOLITAN HALL, CHICAGO,

ON THURSDAY, MARCH 22d, 1860.



CHICAGO:

DAILY DEMOCRAT PRINT, 45 LA SALLE STREET.

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GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMON COUNCIL:

The Chapter of the Charter of the City of Chicago, which requires me to take and subscribe to the oath of office, just administered to me, defines the duties of the Mayor, as follows:

“ He shall preside over the meetings of the Common Council, and take care that the laws of the State and ordinances of the City are duly enforced, respected, and observed, and that all other Executive officers of the City discharge their respective duties. He shall, from time to time, give the Common Council such information, and recommend such measures as he may deem advantageous to the City.”

There are many laws and ordinances appertaining to our Municipal government, the propriety of which may be questioned; but the oath of office which I have just taken requires me to take care that all of them be “duly enforced, respected, and observed.” Furthermore, I am required to take care that all the other officers of the city discharge their duties, in causing each and every one of the laws and ordinances to be “duly enforced, respected, and observed.”

Chapter II. of the City Charter provides for the removal of every person appointed or elected to any office, by a vote of two thirds of all the Aldermen, upon good cause therefor being shown; and it is good cause for the removal of any man when he takes the oath which all officers are compelled to take, and then gives no attention to plain violations of the City laws and ordinances. Such an officer perjures himself, and ought to be promptly removed therefor.

A large number of the city officers are appointed by the Mayor. I shall appoint no man to any office, nor allow him when appointed to remain in any office, unless he can read and understand the laws and ordinances appertaining to the duties of his office, and unless he will heartily co-operate with me in taking care that the laws and ordinances be “duly enforced, respected, and observed.” It is no part of the duty of Executive officers to enquire into the justice or expediency of any law. It is enough for them to know that thus saith the law. Besides, the best way to bring about the repeal of an obnoxious law is to enforce it; and every law which ought not to be, or cannot be, enforced should be at once repealed. Our laws should be few in number and simple in language. The enactments of our legislature are beyond the reach of this Council; but I recommend a thorough revision of our City Ordinances with reference to this consideration. A pamphlet of a few pages only, will contain all the ordinances necessary for the good and quiet government of our city, and a sum merely nominal would supply every family with a copy. If we expect all to obey our laws and ordinances, we should have them within the reach of all.

I am not a candidate for re-election ; and I recommend that, at the next session of our Legislature, our Charter be so amended as to make the Mayor ineligible to an immediate re-election. This is now the case with the Sheriff of our county and Marshal of our city. The Mayor's office is not the place for any man who desires immediate political preferment of any kind, lest the desire to make friends, and the fear to make enemies, prove incentives to him to deviate from the peremptory requirements of the law. The Mayor is but the right arm of the law, and there should be nothing of human ambition to paralyze the power of that arm.

I am aware too many persons think that each Mayor makes his own laws. Now the Mayor can vote only when the Board of Aldermen is equally divided ; and two thirds of the Board can repeal any existing ordinance or enact a new one, in defiance of the Mayor's most active opposition. But, although the Mayor be opposed to an ordinance, his oath requires that he enforce it as rigidly as if it met with his warmest approbation. During my administration, in 1857-8, I was frequently called upon to enforce laws which could never have met with my official approval ; but I was compelled by my oath thus to do, or stand before the world as self-convicted of perjury. There are many ordinances that ought to be repealed or materially amended ; but, so long as you, the legislative power of the city, shall deem it best to leave them as they are, they shall be promptly enforced.

These sentiments are but a repetition of those promulgated in my inaugural address of 1857, and which controlled my action whilst in office. For a long period of the time during which I have been a resident of Chicago, the party with which I was politically associated was in a majority. Yet, during that time, I never entertained the least desire to discharge the duties of the office of Mayor, inasmuch as my name was used in connection with other offices. I looked upon it as an office in which a man who did his duty stood no chance to make friends, but was sure to greatly multiply the number of his opponents. I had received at five different elections the highest office in the gift of the people ; and, in justice to others, I had no right to expect any further honors in that direction. Having finished my political career, and thus being in a situation in which I could afford to act independently, and set at defiance the spirit of lawlessness which was overrunning the city, I consented to take the office of Mayor. Remembering my oath of office, I at once set myself at work to enforce all the laws and ordinances of the city. This gave great offence to a class of voters, who professed to entertain peculiar notions respecting what they called necessary evils in large cities, of which evils they themselves were not only conspicuous patrons, but often large beneficiaries. They censured me for executing laws which they dared not petition to have repealed, and which should now be repealed if they cannot, or ought not, be enforced. But, nevertheless, I continued to enforce the laws. Portions of our city, confiscated to vice and crime, were made orderly and respectable, and are now inhabited by some of our most law abiding citizens. Gambling Houses, Brothels, and other abodes of lawlessness were broken up, and their inmates brought to justice or compelled to leave the city. Many of these offenders, thus disturbed by an honest execution of long existing laws, were persons of wealth, talents and position. They had not then reached that degradation into which an established career of vice is sure eventually to plunge every one. Feeling the effects of such an administration, this class of men have been making it their business to see that there never should be another such Mayor in any city in the Union ; and so they have tried, by every means in their power, to make my former administration odious, both at home and abroad. Not

only has a portion of the press of our own, but of that of almost every city in the Union, been at work to so mould public opinion that no Mayor in any city would ever again endeavor to enforce the laws against this class of offenders. Under this state of things, I deemed it a great moral necessity to appeal to the people again; and for this cause alone did I consent to become a candidate for Mayor. I felt it a duty to show, not only to future Mayors of my own, but to Mayors of every other city, that an executive could be sustained in a faithful execution of the laws against all classes of offenders. Since the close of my former administration I have held myself personally, morally, socially and pecuniarily responsible for all my acts whilst in the office of Mayor. I was tried by those acts at the late election. They were presented in newspapers, and in public speeches, in their worst phase, by those opposed to me. These acts were not only justified by me in a newspaper which I controlled, and also in public speeches made by me in every part of the city; but I avowed, in words unmistakable, that I had no other object in becoming a candidate for Mayor than to have an opportunity to repeat them under the same circumstances. When a candidate in 1857, I received 5,924 votes. At the election just terminated I received, out of 18,747, the number of 10,007 votes, making a majority of 1,267 votes, and being almost double the number I received at my first election; and this, too, with the oldest and most powerful organization in the Union opposing me upon a difference of political sentiments; whilst it was aided by that element of lawlessness which, in large cities, claims to hold the balance of power, and which timid and corrupt aspirants are too apt to court; but which I have ever defied, and shall do my utmost to remove from the city. Fortunately, since I left the office of Mayor, an important ordinance, commonly known as the "Vagrant Act," has been passed, and I intend to rigidly enforce it. Under its provisions, all suspicious persons can be compelled to give "a good account of themselves;" whereas, under my previous administration, I had to await overt acts. My course, then, cannot be misinterpreted. It is not my fault that we have unpopular and unjust laws; but it will be my fault if they are not faithfully executed. I then have but one order to give to those whom the people are taxed to support as my subordinates, and that is:

Remember your oath! Read the laws! Execute them!

SECTION 3D of the Amended City Charter requires that "every act, ordinance or resolution, passed by the Common Council, before it shall take effect, shall be presented, duly certified by the City Clerk, to the Mayor, for his approbation. If he approve, he shall sign it. If not he shall return it with his objections in writing."

I deem it my duty here thus early to state that I shall allow no person to hold any conversation with me respecting such "act, ordinance or resolution." But any citizen or citizens who wish to influence my action thereon, can leave a written communication with the Clerk, whose duty it will be to file such communication with the papers in the case, and such communication will be considered public in its character, and will be preserved in the archives of the city. The same will be my course in relation to all city contracts. All communications with me respecting public business must be in writing, and that writing will be considered the property of the city. The same as regards appointments to office. Verbal communications are liable to misunderstandings, to say nothing of misrepresentations. But allow me to suggest that, as I am held responsible for the acts of my appointees, I shall feel as free to look over the City Directory as I shall the list of applicants.

At my inauguration in 1857, the Funded Debt of the city was \$535,000.

I looked around in vain for those works of great public utility by which we could justify to posterity this tax upon it. After a further examination I found that my predecessors had construed the right to borrow not exceeding one hundred thousand dollars in any one year, authorized by the Charter, as a legitimate source of revenue. So, after they had taxed the people to the utmost limit that they dare do, they borrowed the \$100,000, and expended it. I did not deem it right thus to burthen posterity without an equivalent. Again, our Sewerage Commissioners, and our Water Commissioners, were borrowing money and needed the full credit of our city. So I resolved not to add to our funded debt. I decreased it twenty-one thousand dollars. My successor did not disturb it, and so it now stands at \$514,000. In addition to the legitimate expenses of my administration, I found it burthened with a large number of expensive works, for which contracts had been executed; and all these contracts entered into previous to my administration with their incidents, have cost the city more than the entire amount of its present floating debt. I need hardly call attention in this connection, to the Armory, the City Hospital, fifty thousand dollars to dredge at Rush Street Bridge, &c., &c. Unwilling to leave even a floating debt, my Administration resorted to the very highest point of taxation. It also resorted to such uncommon diligence in the collection of licenses, fines and revenues from all other sources, that it was censured in many quarters for its severity, although it did nothing but that which the law required it should do. I also refused to fill many offices which I had the power to fill, in order to save the salaries to the treasury. For the same reason I used all my efforts to cut down salaries, to otherwise curtail expenses, and frequently had to resort to the veto power. I am satisfied that, had this policy of mine been continued, the city would not be burdened with a floating debt at the present time.

Economy in the administration of public affairs is always desirable, because it is the surest guarantee against corruption. But at the present time it is an imperious necessity. Our city credit was never in such imminent hazard as it is at the present moment. I have been inaugurated at the most critical period of our financial history. But I hope we shall be enabled to maintain our credit untarnished for the few months between this and the next session of our Legislature. At present there seems to be but one voice among our citizens as to the means, then, of relieving us from our present embarrassment and of preventing its recurrence. We must then fund our floating debt and be prohibited from borrowing money or contracting debts thereafter.

After deducting the proceeds of the Tax Sale for this year and of all other revenues accruing prior to April 1st, there will remain a floating debt of full \$300,000. On that day the administration will find itself with an empty Treasury, and with a floating debt of three hundred thousand dollars to provide for. Besides, it will have its own expenses to pay. How are these expenses and this debt to be met? I propose to ask an extension upon all debts contracted prior to April 1st, and petition our Legislature at its next session for the passage of a law allowing the city to fund the same. But the interest upon the above debt will unquestionably have to be paid out of the revenue of this year. It is doubtful what will be the decision of our Courts as to the right of the City to make a temporary loan in anticipation of (the coming) this year's taxes. So there is every probability that all the employees of the City will have to await some time for their pay.

But let us see what are our means of raising revenues from taxes.

We are allowed to raise a tax of two mills for the Sewerage interest, and

this will be hardly sufficient for this purpose.

We are allowed to raise two mills for school purposes, and this will be hardly sufficient.

Whatever money is raised for the reform School must, by law, be applied specifically to that purpose; and which will be the proceeds of a tax of about one half a mill.

For permanent improvements nothing can be raised, except upon the specific improvements named. Any appropriation made, except for such named improvements, would be illegal.

We are allowed to raise but one mill for our interest tax; and this year it will require full two mills for that purpose.

For general purposes three mills and one half are allowed. But of these three mills and a half, at least one mill will have to be taken to meet the interest upon the floating debt, and which is not provided for in the interest tax.

Thus we have left but two mills and one half, with which to carry on the Government for the year commencing April first.

In addition to the floating debt, above mentioned, to be provided for, there is the sum of thirty thousand dollars of the funded debt falling due this year.

With this condition of things before us, how otherwise should a city government conduct itself but as would a private individual under the same circumstances, viz: curtail expenditures in every possible way?

I think that, by funding all the debt accruing prior to April first, the Government can be carried on from April first, 1860, to April first, 1861, with a tax of ten mills only. But this cannot be done if men, after election, falsify pledges of economy made before, and if old claims against the Treasury are to be paid out of the revenues of this year.

It is not my intention to approve of any orders passed by the Council for the payment of bills rejected by the Comptroller, who alone is authorized to contract debts for the City. If individuals think they have any claims against the City, prior to my, and not allowed by the Comptroller during former, administrations, they must seek their remedy in the Courts; for it will only be by the utmost economy that the revenues of the present year can be made to meet the expenses thereof.

There is no city the inhabitants of which have been more willing to make improvements than our own; and as long as their ability to do so continued, they paid all assessments cheerfully. Short crops in the country, and other causes, have tended to interrupt the business of our city, or at least curtail its profits. There is now a general disposition to suspend improvements until business shall become more lucrative. The special assessments of last year were very burdensome to our people; and those who at one time were the most anxious for improvements are now, from inability to pay their assessments, the most anxious to have them temporarily suspended. I therefore recommend the vacation of the office of Superintendent of Special Assessments, until the services of such an officer shall be absolutely needed. Should they be required to close up any works already ordered, I recommend that the Superintendent be appointed only for the necessary period, and in that case upon a *per diem* compensation.

For the same reason I recommend the vacation of the office of City Superintendent, and that some person be employed at a *per diem* compensation to close up the few works remaining unfinished.

The City is now carrying on no work whatever that needs a Superintendent, and the condition of the finances will not allow it to do so during

this municipal year. There are a very few contracts for special improvements for which the warrants have been issued and nearly the whole amount collected. And it is proposed to give our citizens rest from special improvements this year, although cormorant contractors and heartless speculators have already commenced their manœuvres to nullify this beneficent intention of ours. And to illustrate how common it is for administrations to be looking after the interests of office seekers rather than after those of the great mass of the tax payers, I would call your attention to the fact that three men, at an expense of three thousand dollars per annum have been kept in the City Superintendent's office all through the winter, when there was not work enough to occupy the time of the Superintendent himself. The main work for a Superintendent this year will be attendance upon minor repairs, of which it is the custom of the Comptroller to receive the first notice. Any master mechanic, such as received \$3 25 per day last year, could, under the direction of the Comptroller, discharge the entire duties of the City Superintendent for the present year.

Whenever it shall be your pleasure to re-commence our system of city improvements, I earnestly exhort you to allow no work to be undertaken until the assessment roll has been confirmed, and the money actually paid into the City Treasury. It is within the knowledge of you all that oftentimes the first men to ask for improvements are the last to pay for them. Indeed there are some persons who never would do so if they could avoid it by any legal technicality. It is often the case, also, that contractors, owners of gravel pits, stone quarries, lumber yards, &c., &c., set on foot improvements which are neither asked for by the parties interested, nor needed by the public at large. A temporary suspension of our system of improvements, under special assessments, would be a measure of great relief to many of our property holders, and would be injurious to none; for those who realize any thing of the future prospects of Chicago must know that such a suspension would be but temporary.

When we ask the Legislature to allow us to fund the present floating debt, I recommend that ample provision be made, in the law to be passed, against any further increase of the funded debt, or power to create a floating debt. Our Sewerage Commissioner and Water Commissioner debts are liable to be increased with the increase of the city. In order to keep our credit good for these purposes we should have no power to create any other debt, and should have a separate tax for our interest, and for a sinking fund. In many cities, at the present time, all appropriations are void whenever there is not at the time money in the Treasury to meet them. This provision prevents a city from running in debt, and should be made the law in Chicago. Had such a provision been in force from the origin of our city government, its advantages would have been incalculable.

Whenever a judgment is obtained against the City, the Comptroller should have power to raise a temporary loan to meet it, and should be required to add the amount to his estimates for the next year. Then limit the power to tax to a fixed number of mills and there will be no danger of our credit's being impaired hereafter, by extravagance or corruption.

I recommend the abolition of the offices of City Physician and Health Officer; the former officer is paid the sum of eight hundred, and the latter one thousand dollars per annum. It is the duty of the County to provide medical attendance for the poor, and, whether a poor man is in the Bridewell or out of it, he has claims upon the County. The City, forgetting that it was the duty of the County to provide for the sick poor, has erected a Hospital at an expense of \$73,538, which to the city is the same as so much

money thrown away. I recommend the sale of said Hospital to the County, as the County has need of it, whilst the City has not. All the duties of Health Officer can be performed by the Policemen of the City, a portion of whose business is to see that Health ordinances and regulations are complied with as well as others. Should any contagious disease break out in our city, I should at once appoint and convvoke a Board of Health, composed of some of our oldest and most discreet citizens, and promptly submit to you the result of its sanitary deliberations for your action.

Section 2 of Chapter XL. of Municipal Laws says:

"The Mayor shall be the head of the Police Department, and shall superintend and direct the Police generally."

It has been suggested that orders could be issued directly to the Lieutenants of the Divisions, and thereby save the salary of the Captain of Police, which is fifteen hundred dollars per annum. I am willing to try the experiment of getting along without a Captain, and hope I may succeed. I therefore shall not nominate any person to that office at present.

During my former term as Mayor, I appointed no such officer as Prosecuting Attorney of the Police Court, which officer now receives a salary of Twelve Hundred Dollars per annum. The City Attorney attended to all the legal business in 1857, and there is no probability that there will be as much business of that character to transact this year as there was during that. So I recommend the abolition of this office. I have procured from the dockets of our various Courts a list of the city cases, and after a thorough examination, am satisfied that this can be safely done. Our city business in the upper Courts is always liable to exaggeration, from the fact that so many cases are appealed for the purpose of delay, but which are finally disposed of by default; whilst in the Police Court most of the cases are disposed of by the prisoners pleading guilty.

There is great need of a Registry Law, to secure the purity of the elective franchise in our city. Almost all other cities have such a law. Registry laws have been rendered unnecessarily unpopular in many instances in consequence of their containing some new qualification for the voter. I would be willing to have the qualifications remain as liberal as they are at present, but I would insist that every man should have his name and place of residence registered a sufficient length of time before election, so that the poll list could be printed with the names arranged in alphabetical order. This would not only protect our Wards from fraudulent voters, but would greatly expedite the process of voting, and save much of the ill-feeling which is now engendered at the polls in consequence of questioning and challenging. On the eve of the late election, a large number of persons were imported into our city, and scattered about in small numbers through the different Wards, so as to avoid appearances as far as was possible. Those persons are not now to be found in our city. There is but one inference to be drawn from this, and that is, that they came from parts unknown to us for the purpose of voting in our city, and that they have since election returned to their homes. Again, from the evening of the day preceding the election to the dawn of election day, there could have been seen around the polls, in several of the Wards, a class of strange men conversing about the importance and the means of getting early possession of them, and blockading them, so as to keep back the well-known and tax-paying citizens. After thus keeping awake all night, you could have seen these same persons traveling from Ward to Ward, voting or trying to vote, wherever they went; and finally, when the last poll was closed, you could have seen them standing around complaining that the polls were closed too early for them.

Where are these men who, but a few days since, were manifesting such an interest in the affairs of our city? The men who brought them here sent them home again. Now, if this state of things is to continue, our offices may as well be set up at auction and knocked down to the highest bidder; for the men who have the means to import the largest number of voters will eventually get the offices. It is not the conflict of principles which will cause an outlay of money sufficient to make such an importation of illegal voters, but of interests. The men who have private interests to subserve can afford the expense of it, but all such men will reimburse themselves with interest whenever they can reach the public treasury. Hence, one set of men may resort to this method of carrying elections to-day, and another set to-morrow, just as private interest may dictate. In fine, therefore, every tax-payer, without distinction of party; every man who would protect the public treasury, has a strong pecuniary interest in a Registry law. No honest cause ever required an illegal vote. An office seeker who pays a dollar for such a vote intends to get it back when elected.

There are two classes of men who take offices. One class takes them as a matter of public duty, the same as an active business man serves upon the jury, does military duty, or as you, gentlemen, discharge the duties of Aldermen. This class labors for the good of the whole, instead of for that of particular individuals in the community. Selfish interests are sacrificed by it to the paramount interests of the public. There is another class that follows office-holding as a permanent means of livelihood. When candidates, these men profess great sympathies for the masses; and how can office-holders manifest their sympathies for the masses better than by contributing all their efforts to relieve them from the burthens of taxation? Yet, no sooner are they elected than they throw every possible obstacle in the way of reduction of fees, salaries, &c., &c., without which there can be no reduction of taxes. They make personal appeals to Aldermen, and send others to make them. They talk of the poverty of themselves; and the destitution of their families. But they ignore the poverty of the people who elected them. They forget that the destitution of widows and orphans who happen to own as their little all a residuary interest in encumbered property is no bar to the demands of the relentless tax-gatherer. It is not a necessity that these men hold office. It is a necessity, however, that people pay taxes. It is a common remark of men when installed in lucrative offices that, in order to get good men, we must pay large salaries. This is not true. For there is not an office in our city that could not be filled by an equal to its present incumbent in every qualification, and oftentimes by a superior, for less money. I look upon it as calamitous, to both the country and the office-holder, when office seeking becomes a profession, and when a man puts his eye upon the public treasury as a means of support from boyhood to old age. It is better that offices be taken for their honors, and that they be distributed more generally than they now are among the community. Next beyond the importance of questions affecting the rights of men in a national point of view, the dominant party in Chicago owes its success in the late election to its promises of economy. These promises the unsuccessful party denounced as hypocritical. It will soon be seen whether they were so or not. If men do not like their fees and salaries they can resign their offices. And, when men come around you, gentlemen of the Council, panting for more of the sweat and blood of our tax-payers, if you will only stand firm, tell them that it is your duty to protect the people's treasury, and advise them to resign if they do not like their pay, they will cease to trouble you. I shall make no appointments until the salaries of the appointees are fixed, and shall

promptly remove any man who complains of the inadequacy of his compensation. It shall not be my fault if the public expectation, with reference to a reduction of the expenses of our city, is not fulfilled.

Section 15 of Chapter III. of the City Charter comes greatly to our aid in all measures of economical reform. It says:

"The Common Council shall have the power, from time to time, to require further and other duties of all officers whose duties are herein prescribed, and prescribe the powers and duties of all officers appointed or elected to any office under this act, whose duties are not herein specifically mentioned, and fix their compensation."

This will enable the Council to assign to any officer the duties of any office which a just regard for the universal expectation that we will curtail our city expenses, may require us to abolish.

The same Section says:

"They may also require Bonds to be given to the City of Chicago by all officers for the faithful performance of their duties."

I recommend that all our City officers and employees be required to give bonds of some kind. If the negligence, ignorance or malfeasance of an officer or an employee is the means of the City's losing money, it is the same thing to the tax-payers as if the money were taken directly from the Treasury. The City Attorney should be required not only to give Bond for the faithful discharge of his duties, but also to faithfully close up without cost to the city the suits commenced during his term of office. It is almost invariably the case that a City Attorney is necessitated to consult his predecessor respecting unfinished business, and this results in the City's having to pay a large bill every year for extra legal services. Well-meaning and honest physicians and surgeons are held responsible for their malpractice, even when it is the result of inexperience alone. So it ought to be with City employees. This would secure to the City better services, as men would not recommend those whose bonds they would not sign.

It has become too common for persons fined in our Courts to appeal to the Council to have their fines remitted. Every person is entitled to a fair and impartial trial before our Courts, can be heard by Counsel, and can call for a jury. If he is not satisfied with one trial, he can ask for another, or appeal to a higher Court. It is not one of the defects of Chicago that it has not Courts enough. Now these appeals from the Courts to the Common Council are but appeals from public justice to private sympathy. An Alderman can only get at one, and that the interested, side of a case. Besides, he has no power to examine witnesses under oath. My approbation cannot be given to any such interference with the duties of our Courts.

In discussing the necessity of additional legislation for our city at the next session of our Legislature, we should not be unmindful of the large contributions which the city is compelled to make to the various offices in the Court House under stealthy legislative enactments, which have been accumulating for years. Too many of our officers have been in the habit of quietly slipping off to the State Capital and procuring the passage of laws by the Legislature which take money from the great masses of the tax-payers outside of the Court House, to fill the pockets of the few inside; and the great extent of the legislation of this kind shows that too many of our legislators were laboring under the impression that they owed a greater obligation to the office-holders than to the people at large. Although these remarks are applicable to the greater number of the offices with which the city is compelled to transact any business, I prefer to illustrate them by the office of Sheriff, because I can do so without being charged with any unkind feelings towards its worthy incumbent, as he has received no benefits from

any legislation enacted against the city during his term, and as he is ineligible to a re-election. The Sheriff gets fifty cents per day, or \$3 50 per week, for dieting prisoners. The Bridewell keeper gets fifteen cents per day, or \$1.05 per week for the same thing. The Sheriff gets \$20 for every jury summoned to the City Court, thirty-five cents for every committal, and thirty-five more for every discharge in the same Court. There has been over \$7,000 paid for dieting prisoners the past year, when the City could have done the same thing at the Bridewell for less than one-third the amount. There has been paid the past year, to the Sheriff, for fees in serving papers and for pay of officers in attending Court, \$2,300, when the City Marshal and Policemen could have performed the same duties with scarcely any extra expense to the City.

Legislation in this matter is much needed, and now is the time to begin to agitate for it. Candidates are already numerous and are fast becoming more so. Let all candidates for County offices be given to understand that they must be pledged to throw no obstacle in the way of a proper reduction of the amount of their drafts upon the pockets of the tax-payers, and all candidates for the Legislature also be given to understand that their allegiance is due to those outside the Court House. There is but one way to reduce expenses; and it is neither Republican nor Democratic to oppress the many for the aggrandizement of the few.

The Reform School is fulfilling the expectations of its most sanguine friends. The tax for its support last year was one mill, but the product of this tax was not all needed, and it is thought that only one half of a mill will be required this year. It is hoped the day is not far distant when the State will establish such an institution, and thereby relieve the City from the expense of supporting it. I wish our City finances, or even our City credit, were in a situation to warrant me in recommending a similar institution for girls. It is much needed. Humanity demands it. Should the system of Finance recommended by me be carried out, I now know of nothing to prevent my successor from recommending the immediate establishment of such a much needed institution. The "Ordinance concerning the Reform School" should be so amended as to make the Provisions of Sec. 6 of the amended Chapter apply to the Members of the Board of Guardians, as well as to the Members of the Common Council. There are even stronger reasons why members of the Board of Guardians should not have voted to them any salaries or compensation than there are that Members of the Common Council should not. Whilst Mayor of the city, in 1857, I took strong grounds against this practice, and was in hopes that it had been abandoned. I find however, that one of the Guardians gets eight hundred dollars per annum for services that ought to be performed by the Comptroller. In order that the Comptroller might know the wants of the Reform School, I appointed him one of the Guardians, which position he now holds. Let the Board of Guardians issue their drafts for supplies upon the Comptroller, and let him contract for them. The Comptroller is the financial officer of the City. He is sworn to a faithful discharge of his duties. He gives ample Bonds and can be removed for malfeasance. I can sign no order appropriating money to pay any compensation to a member of the Board of Guardians.

Additional legislation is required to prevent our Street Commissioners from expending more money than is appropriated to them, and also to prevent their expending the whole amount of their appropriations in the early part of the year. The Comptroller cannot pay out of the Treasury for any purpose any more money than is appropriated for that specific purpose. The mal-

conduct of the Street Commissioner in this respect either deprives the laborer of his wages, or compels him to wait until the next year's appropriation. Each Division should have money to its credit to the very end of the year. Hence I recommend that, in appropriating money for street labor, you limit the amount which the Comptroller shall pay out in any one month. With over eighteen thousand voters at one and one-half dollars each, there ought to be collected at least Twenty Five Thousand Dollars for Street Taxes. I recommend a special Street Tax Collector for each Ward, who shall be a resident of the Ward for which he collects, and that the amount collected from the voters of each Ward be expended in that Ward. This will create a community of interest among the people of the Ward; and, by taking the poll lists at the election, as each voter is required to pay a street tax, the collector will have it in his power to expose persons who voted, but cannot now be found. The publication of the names of such persons would furnish a very interesting commentary upon the election frauds in our city.

A Board of Public Works is much needed, both to systematize and economize our improvements. In the legitimate discharge of their respective duties, we find the Street Commissioners, the Board of Sewerage Commissioners, the Water Commissioners and City Superintendent severally opening and filling the same ground in a single week. The work is paid for four times, when, with a consolidation of these different offices and boards, it need be but once. The great obstacle in the way of this much needed reform is the incumbents of the offices. Every man dislikes to be legislated out of office. But the law need not take effect until the terms of the offices of Street Commissioners and City Superintendent expire, and the Boards of Water and Sewerage Commissioners could be consolidated into a Board of Public Works, to consist of the present six incumbents, until the terms of any two expire. Then one only should be elected to supply the place of the two. Thus, in two years, we could have a new Board consisting of only three members. This measure has been defeated heretofore by a struggle for offices. The plan suggested would prevent this struggle hereafter. When we reflect that each of these Boards has a separate Engineer, Secretary and other assistants receiving large salaries, and that the City Superintendent and Street Commissioners have each their assistants, it is safe to say that their consolidation would save at least \$25,000 per annum to our city.

The ordinance providing for the organization of the Paid Fire Department, passed before the City had much experience with reference to this indispensable institution, needs alteration in many important particulars. Although those portions of it which conflict with the City Charter are of no force, yet they mislead the firemen, who have a right to suppose that they can rely upon the provisions of the Ordinance. The Charter requires that all officers not elected by the People shall be appointed by the Mayor; and no ordinance of the City can shield the Mayor from a just responsibility in seeing that all the members of our Paid Fire Department, like the other officers of the city, are men qualified by intelligence, character and habits for their positions.

In the revision of your rules, I recommend that you dispense with the Committee on Claims, which committee was created before the new charter went into effect. Section thirteen of the new Charter provides that, when the Comptroller shall doubt the "Correctness of any claim he shall submit the same to the Mayor and Finance Committee for their decision thereon, which decision shall be binding upon the City and filed among his other

vouchers in the Comptroller's Office." The object of this section is to take all claims away from the Common Council and give them to the Comptroller, with the right to appeal to the Mayor and Finance Committee. This does not debar any claimant from his right to sue the city in any of our Courts. I look upon it, that the duties of the Committee on Claims are merged in that of the Finance Committee. Hereafter all disputed accounts, in the Comptroller's office, will be referred directly to the Mayor and Finance Committee, and their decision will be a bar to any action of the Common Council. No officer of the City save the Comptroller can contract a debt against the City, neither can that officer until a specific appropriation be first made. Yet the Common Council is frequently appealed to for the allowance of claims and bills, which the Comptroller has no power to allow, even if he had the disposition. I recommend you, gentlemen, to scan well your general appropriation bill, due in the month of April, and after that shall have passed, to close the door of your Treasury for the remainder of the year. We can only raise, by taxation, such an amount of money as is covered by the General Appropriation Bill. If we vote money from the Treasury for objects not specified in the General Appropriation Bill, a floating debt is inevitable.

I would recommend great circumspection in your action concerning the vacation of streets and alleys. By a law of the last session of our Legislature, a majority of a quorum can vacate any street or alley without any previous notice. In the known absence of some members of this Board, two members can call eleven together, and six of the eleven can close up Lake Street or any other street in the city, and the same six can at once choose the Commissioners to assess damages. A law so summary as this and made applicable to our whole city was not enacted without an object. The excitement caused by its passage may have prevented action under its provisions last year. Your circumspection may prevent any this year. But the existence of such a law tends to impair confidence in the value of Chicago real estate investments, as the value of land is estimated by its number of feet front; and a gentleman from the East may come here and buy frontage, and before he reaches his home, under the summary provisions of this law, he may be deprived of the sole object of his purchase.

A Committee of the Board of Education has called public attention to a statement of facts well calculated to alarm our citizens with respect to the safety of a portion of our School Fund. The Charter requires that all officers of the City not elected by the people, shall be nominated by the Mayor. Now as both the Comptroller and School Agent are required to be nominated by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council, it has occurred to me that since there is no difference in the means of appointing these two officers, the duties of School Agent might be performed by the Comptroller without any additional expense to the City. If the Comptroller does not give ample bonds to cover the amount of School Fund, the Council has ample power to increase them. In this way the salary of the School Agent, which is \$500, will be saved for the benefit of the Schools. This will be more convenient for the public, as the Comptroller's office is open during all business hours. It has been suggested that the Board of Education have control of this office. Now, my remarks concerning the Board of Guardians of Reform School, will apply to the Board of Education. You, Gentlemen of the Common Council, are prohibited from receiving any office at the hands of the City, and I hope the day is not far distant, when the Board of Supervisors of Cook County, the Board of Guardians of Reform

School, and all other Boards will have the same restrictions applied to them as are now applied to you.

Indeed, it is to be hoped that the day is not distant when the standard of moral integrity will be so high that no such law may be necessary to avert the selfish schemes of men in official positions. Should my recommendation be adopted, a provision should be made that the Comptroller make a monthly report to the Board of Education and to the Common Council of his transactions touching the School Fund, and that any member of the Board of Education or of the Common Council should at all times have free access to the Books and papers relating thereto.

I am satisfied that the office of Assistant Harbor Master which now costs the city \$500 per annum is a sinecure and should be abolished.

GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMON COUNCIL:—However much we may differ respecting the question of the voluntary and involuntary systems of labor, that now constitutes the only difference between the two great political parties of our nation, there is no necessity that we should be divided in our opinions or our actions in Municipal affairs. Good order affects us all alike. Economy reduces the taxes of all alike. The preservation of our City's credit benefits us all alike. A proper enforcement of the laws gives security alike to all. We all have children in whose future our hopes are alike concentrated. Our interests are one. Our expectations are the same. Our destinies are identical. Why, then, should we differ? I am your presiding officer for the last time. Seven endorsements at the hands of my fellow citizens have satisfied my most sanguine aspirations. It is for some of them soon to stand in the position which I now occupy; and when they do, they will appreciate my appeal, to forget all outside differences, and remember only the interests of our city. The pressure upon us from claimants, contractors and office-hunters will be great. We must steel our hearts to all other sympathies but those for the tax-payers of our city. The man who does this belongs to my party, so far as all municipal affairs are concerned, and I belong to his. The eyes of all our citizens are upon us. They expect much at this crisis in our financial affairs, at our hands. Your future prospects demand that that expectation shall not be destroyed; whilst I, in my determination to retire to private life, have but one ambition; and, in accordance therewith, I invoke the aid of the Ruler of the Universe, that our Administration may be governed in all things by the right, and be conducive to the lasting welfare of our city.

JOHN WENTWORTH.

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